

best reforms are always accomplished in revolutions.

It is said, what are you going to do with this class of people? Do with them? Let anybody go out on this railroad to Camp Parole, and if he does not see more greenbacks in the pockets of some of the wenches and other negroes traveling on that road than are in the pockets of many of the white people, I will confess myself greatly mistaken. Everybody knows that these people are now abundantly able to make their own living. It is true that gentlemen say they make it at the expense of their masters, at the expense of those who own them. But how can we with any consistency say that, when in addition to the practical emancipation accomplished by this war we have added legal emancipation? We cannot say it is unjust to the masters that these negroes make their own living. And will anybody say that any negro boy sixteen years of age, or even twelve years of age, is not able to make his own living now? You cannot get labor, black or white, though you cry for it. Old colored men are now getting wages in this State at the rate of two dollars and a half a day. A gentleman told me the other day that he paid two dollars and a half a day to an old colored man for white-washing a wall, and could not get him for less.

Gentlemen talk about protecting these poor helpless negroes. The negro has no apprehension on the subject; they feel no difficulty about the future. Let them take care of themselves, if they are satisfied to do it.

In conclusion, let me say that the existing legislation remedies all the practical evils which ought to be remedied. Those masters who now have negro children in their infancy can be fully protected under the existing system. But this proposed section, if adopted, would place in the constitution beyond the control of the legislature any opportunity to alter that system, however necessary and important any such alteration may become. And I say again, it puts into the constitution something which looks inconsistent with what we have already done, and which must be accepted by the people in that light.

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. The amendment which I submitted to the convention has provoked much more discussion than I anticipated; discussion not confined to the amendment itself, but going over the whole ground covered by the proposition of the gentleman from Caroline (Mr. Todd.) And it has been met not only by arguments, but by assumptions the most unwarranted, and in at least one instance, by a sneer that would have been contemptible in defence of any other than so worthless a cause as this.

I propose to say a few words in opposition to the proposition of the gentleman from Caroline (Mr. Todd,) and in advocacy of my own. It is well perhaps at the outset to see

where we shall stand if the proposition of the gentleman from Caroline should not be adopted, and where we shall be placed in the event of its adoption. The law as it now stands upon our statute book makes abundant provision for all possible cases which can arise. And it does it with all the fulness of detail which in an act of assembly is perfectly proper, but which you cannot incorporate into a constitution provision. It provides, Code, article 6, section, 31 :

"The several orphans' courts of this State shall, upon information being given to them, summon before them the child of any free negro, and if it shall appear upon examination before such court that it would be better for the habits and comfort of such child that it should be bound as an apprentice to some white person to learn to labor, the court shall bind such child as an apprentice to some white person, if a male, till he is of the age of twenty-one years, or if a female, till she is of the age of eighteen years."

Wherever the comfort and habits of such child require that such binding shall take place, it is obligatory upon the court to so bind it. But this most monstrous proposition of the gentleman from Caroline proposes that the orphans' courts shall take all negroes who are minors, without an exception, and bind them out as apprentices. And now upon what ground? Is it on the ground that it is for the good of the minors? Let gentlemen take up and examine the principle upon which they have founded their previous action. That principle, if I understand it, is that all men have some rights; and if there be one right common to all men which is more sacred than another, it is the right of the parent to foster and educate the child; and the obligation of the child to support and soothe the declining years of his parents is not more binding or obligatory. It is the right of the parents, wherever their character is such that they are capable of taking care of their children, to guide them in their early years.

Now what is proposed by the gentleman from Caroline (Mr. Todd) to be done? It is proposed to take, without a single exception, every female child who shall be emancipated by the operation of this constitution, who shall be under eighteen years of age, from her parents, whatever may be their condition, however able and willing they may be to support her, and bind her in unwilling servitude until she shall have attained the age of eighteen years; and to take every male child in the same way until he shall have reached the age of twenty-one years. Now where is the right, the justice, aye, the decency of such a provision? And more, it is proposed by these same gentlemen to bind them in an ignorance which shall be life-long. For the very advocates of this proposition oppose the amendment which I have offered, that these people shall, in this involuntary servitude, be